



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

## Minutes of Proceedings

Monday 28 June 2021

**Meeting Location:** Virtual Meeting via StarLeaf

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Declan McAleer MLA (Chairperson)  
Philip McGuigan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Rosemary Barton MLA  
John Blair MLA  
Harry Harvey MLA  
William Irwin MLA  
Patsy McGlone MLA

**Apologies:** Clare Bailey MLA

**In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**

Nick Henry, Clerk  
Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk  
Neal Flanagan, Assistant Clerk  
Marion Johnson, Clerical Supervisor



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The meeting commenced at 3.35 p.m. in Closed Session.

### **1. Apologies**

As above.

The Chairperson informed Members that Clare Bailey had delegated her vote to the Chair in accordance with Temporary Standing Order 115(6).

### **2. Chairperson's Business**

None.

### **3. Draft Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 23 June 2021 were agreed.

### **4. Matters Arising**

The Committee considered correspondence received from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in respect of the recent press leak of a draft version of the Committee's report into the withdrawal of DAERA and local authority staff from ports.

Members voiced their concern that the leak took place and agreed that it was a regrettable incident.

In response to a question from a Member regarding a leak investigation, the Clerk advised that he had sought guidance on the matter and it was thought that, given the



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considerable staff resources and time that would be required, and that it was questionable whether the source would ultimately be established, a leak investigation was not advisable.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the Clerk should reply to the Minister on behalf of the Committee outlining:

- that the Committee acknowledges the leak was unfortunate and disappointing;
- that Members and staff have been reminded of their responsibilities and the expectation that papers not be disclosed without Committee approval;
- that additional measures have been taken to mark further drafts;
- and that, given it was an initial draft only, the Committee is content that its ultimate findings and conclusions have not been prejudiced.

### **5. Written Briefing: Consideration of Draft Report – Withdrawal of DAERA and Local Authority Staff from Ports**

The Chairperson set out that the purpose of this item of business was to seek agreement on a revised draft of the Committee's report on its investigation into the withdrawal of DAERA and local authority staff from ports. The Chairperson advised the Committee that the latest draft took into account additions, revisions and other amendments that Members had agreed at the meeting on Wednesday 23 June 2021.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to the removal of paragraph 6 of the Executive Summary at page 4 of the draft report.

Patsy McGlone joined the meeting at 3.49 p.m.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the amendments and revisions in the latest draft report that had been made as a result of discussions at the meeting on 23 June 2021.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the final draft report to DAERA and Mid and East Antrim Borough Council for review and return within five working days; to



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the subsequent publication of the final report on the Committee's webpage; and to advise relevant stakeholders who gave evidence to the Committee of the report's publication.

In response to a query from a Member, the Committee Clerk emphasised that it was not envisaged that substantive changes would be made to the report as a result of any feedback from the Department or MEABC.

Committee Members expressed their thanks to the Committee Clerk, the former Clerk, and the Committee team for their work on the investigation and the report.

Mr Irwin stated that DUP Committee Members still had concerns around the report and could not support it as it stood, but intended to bring forward an addendum, outlining points of difference.

The Committee Clerk outlined the timeline for next steps, including that the final draft report would be tabled at the Committee's meeting on Thursday 8 July 2021 for publication by the following day.

### **6. AOB**

None.

### **7. Date, Time and Place of the next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs will take place on Thursday 1 July 2021 at 10.00 a.m. and will be a hybrid meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.08 p.m.



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**Declan McAleer MLA**  
**Chairperson, Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee**